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SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT TIGHTENS CONTROL OVER MEDIA -- NEW

ACCREDITATION REQUIREMENTS PUBLISHED

- ¶1. The government of Zimbabwe has announced the new registration and accreditation requirements for media organizations and journalists as prescribed by the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA). According to an extraordinary gazette published on June 15, media organizations are now required to pay an application fee of Z\$20,000 and a registration charge of Z\$500,000. Local journalists working for the local media are now required to pay an application fee of Z\$1,000 and an accreditation fee of Z\$5,000, to allow them to operate in the country. Local freelance journalists will pay an application fee of Z\$500 and an accreditation fee of Z\$2,500. Local journalists working for the foreign media will pay an application fee of US\$50 and an accreditation fee of US\$1,000. Foreign journalists intending to work temporarily in Zimbabwe are required to pay US\$100 and another US\$500 for accreditation. All foreign media organizations seeking permission to operate a representative office in Zimbabwe are now required to pay an application fee of US\$2,000 and another US\$10,000 for permission to operate.
- ¶2. The new regulations also require that applications from media organizations include information about their business plan. That includes annual balance sheets, profit and loss statements, cash flow statements, and information about the organization's financial backers and its leaders' professional experience. Media organizations will also be required to pay a levy of 0.5 percent of its audited annual gross turnover to the Media and Information Fund.
- ¶3. In conjunction with other aspects of AIPPA, most notably its prohibition on "publishing falsehoods" (thus far applied only to privately owned media), these new registration procedures strengthen the Government of Zimbabwe's ability to control the media.
- ¶4. Under headline "Media should not be entrapped like the commercial farmers," the June 15 edition of the independent daily "The Daily News" carried the following editorial:

".Registering with the registrar of companies is a legal requirement upon forming a company, so the requirement under the AIPPA that media companies - already registered under the Companies Act - should register again, amount to double registration. If there is no intent to deny any media organization registration, why does the Media and Information Commission not accept registration under the Companies Act as being valid under the law.? One of the dilemmas of registering is that it presupposes an acceptance to subject oneself to AIPPA. Once you are in you can't get out. It also might imply full acceptance of the penalties attached thereto. In fairness to all, the media organizations should seek a postponement to the Sunday deadline, while the commission prepares itself for the task."

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